

MARTA MIQUEL-BALDELLOU

FROM DECLINE TO BECOMING: EVOLVING IMAGES
OF AGING MASCULINITIES IN STEPHEN KING'S
MR MERCEDES

INTRODUCTION

Following in the footsteps of his literary mentor, Edgar Allan Poe, who wrote a trilogy of detective tales at the peak of his career, Stephen King also produced a trilogy of novels, mostly ascribed to the hard-boiled tradition. Dedicated to the writer James M. Cain, King's first novel in the trilogy, *Mr Mercedes* (2014), revolves around Bill Hodges, a detective recently retired from the police department, who leads a lonely and secluded life until he receives a letter from Mr Mercedes, the man who caused a car massacre in a case which was still unsolved when Bill retired. The success of *Mr Mercedes* was followed by the publication of its sequel, *Finders Keepers* (2015), and the final novel in the trilogy, *End of Watch* (2016). Besides, King's detective trilogy has recently been adapted for the screen as a television series directed by David E. Kelley, which premiered in 2017. Within the framework of age and gender studies, this article will focus on King's novel *Mr Mercedes* in its portrayal of Bill Hodges as an aging male detective in a contemporary novel grounded in the tradition of hard-boiled detective fiction.

Years before the publication of his first hard-boiled novel, King wrote a short story entitled "Umney's Last Case," compiled in his collection *Nightmares and Dreamscapes* (1993), which revolves around a private investigator who is visited by the writer who created him, thus giving rise to a post-

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modern hard-boiled detective story. Given its emphasis on metafiction, King's "Umney's Last Case" bears resemblance to Paul Auster's *The New York Trilogy* (1985–1985) and Martin Amis's *Night Train* (1997) as postmodern interpretations of the American detective novel. In contrast with classic detective or golden age detective fiction, which featured refined, if not elitist, male detectives of European descent, hard-boiled novels rather originated in response to the social, economic, and political conditions characterizing the 1920s and 1930s in the United States of America (Pepper 2010, 141). In hard-boiled fiction, detectives—portrayed as solitary, masculine, and tough—exert authority, often resorting to violence in order to defend the law and combat organized crime. Iconic prototypes of hard-boiled detectives, such as Dashiell Hammett's Sam Spade and Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe, have usually been associated with traits pertaining to dominant masculinities. As evidence of the manifest manliness that usually characterizes this archetype, in his essay "The Simple Art of Murder" (1944), Raymond Chandler describes the hard-boiled detective, claiming that "[the] detective in this kind of story must be such a man—he is the hero; he is everything—he must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man" (59), thus emphasizing the manly features that usually typify the detective in the hard-boiled genre.

Nevertheless, contemporary interpretations have called into question the portrayal of the hard-boiled detective as an epitome of hegemonic masculinity—a term coined by sociologist Raewyn Connell in 1987—which has conventionally associated manhood with values such as courage and physical strength. In this respect, Frank Krutnik (1991) argues that crime fiction underscores "the destabilisation of masculine identity" (128), and in particular, Andrew Pepper claims that "the hard-boiled male's toughness ... has always been little more than a ruse or façade" (147). Besides, as Adrienne Gavin (2010) contends, the female hard-boiled tradition arises as "a feminist response to male hard-boiled writing" (265), with contemporary writers like Sue Grafton, Marcia Muller and Sara Paretsky, who have created urban female private investigators that resort to violence in order to fight against crime, thus handling guns and facing attacks from men, although they also show their vulnerability, since they are often hard-drinking loners and must face dangerous physical threats. As Gavin further asserts, by means of first-person narratives that display women's exposure to patriarchal systems of crime and justice, these contemporary hard-boiled women writers revise "masculine hard-boiled tropes" and turn "the male hard-boiled tradition into

a counter-tradition" (265). It can thus be argued that, even if rooted in classic hard-boiled fiction, King's novel *Mr Mercedes* responds to current interpretations of the hard-boiled detective, particularly in relation to latent anxieties about constraining discourses of hegemonic masculinities, since Bill Hodges is portrayed as an older and more vulnerable hero than standard predecessors in the genre.

Regarding the discourses of masculinity in contemporary action narratives, scholar Paul Smith (1995) identifies three stages which the hero often undergoes, moving from "eroticization, through destruction, to re-emergence and regeneration" (81). Therefore, according to Smith, the hero first displays his male potency and authority, then faces some danger which threatens his life, and he finally emerges triumphant by means of a symbolic rebirth. As an alternative to this tripartite metaphorical journey of the hero, the character of Bill Hodges in *Mr Mercedes*—as an aging hard-boiled detective—rather goes through three narrative phases, which—according to contemporary scholars in age studies, such as Margaret Gullette (2011), Hilde Lindemann Nelson (1995), and Pamela Gravagne (2013)—can be described as an initial narrative of decline, a subsequent counter-story, and an eventual narrative of becoming. As King's literary persona has been growing older, the discourse of aging has also been acquiring a more central role in his novels, thus arising as a significant variable which conditions the way masculinities are portrayed in his fiction. Accordingly, this article will approach King's *Mr Mercedes* as a contemporary hard-boiled novel with the purpose of describing the significant part that aging plays in supporting and subverting displays of hegemonic masculinities, which have traditionally been considered as distinctive of hard-boiled fiction. Besides, this article will also analyse how the interaction between the discourses of masculinities and aging influence as well as determine the three different stages that the main male character in King's novel goes through, which respectively comprise decay, positive aging, and becoming.

1. NARRATIVES OF DECLINE AND AGEISM

In the initial passages of *Mr Mercedes*, as a retired detective, Bill is portrayed as an elderly man who hardly ever leaves home and leads an apparently aimless existence, as he spends most of the afternoons watching television and drinking beer. A series of recurring images accentuate Bill's

increasingly aging traits, since “his scalp gleams mellowly through his thinning hair” (King 2014, 38), and as a result of a careless diet, he has turned into “a retiree who’s thirty pounds overweight” (39). Besides, Bill lives alone, as it is disclosed that his wife Corinne abandoned him owing to his alcoholism. After a lifetime devoted to combating crime at the police department, Bill believes that at this stage his life has no purpose and even considers the possibility of committing suicide, which exposes his depressive state in addition to his declining physical condition.

In contrast, Pete Huntley—Bill’s former colleague at the police department—leads an exciting life that Bill unashamedly appears to envy. After meeting Pete to have lunch, Bill is described as an “overweight retiree sitting slumped in his seat like a robot with dead batteries” (66), and he suspects that the waiters think he is “riding into the Kingdom of Dementia on the Alzheimer’s Express” (69). Moreover, Bill sometimes feels out of touch with the current times, as he is not particularly fond of new technologies and keeps on forgetting his mobile phone, which is described as “pretty pre-historic, as cell phones go” (189), although he justifies himself, stating that no one cares to call him anymore.

In the light of Bill’s life in his retirement, his aging process is recurrently associated with physical decline, loneliness, detachment, and even death. This portrayal of Bill in his old age complies with Gullette’s statement that in our culture “aging equals decline” (2004, 7). According to Gullette, as opposed to a progress narrative, which “projects a moving image of the self through its past and onward to a better future” (2011, 151), a decline narrative “worsens the experience of aging-past-youth” (5). In addition, the discourses that categorize Bill as old often evoke the specter of ageism, which was developed by Robert Butler (1969), and later on by Alex Comfort (1976), to refer to the systematic social discrimination against people on account of their age, just like racism and sexism respectively operate in relation to skin color and gender. The normative age for retirement, which renders Bill a non-valid individual to society and obliges him to stop working, responds to bureaucratic dictates that categorize him as old prematurely, irrespective of his personal condition as an individual who simply happens to be sixty-two years of age.

According to Judy Chu, Michelle Porche, and Deborah Tolman (2005), masculinity has conventionally been related to “physical toughness, emotional stoicism, projected self-sufficiency, and heterosexual dominance over women” (94). Besides, owing to traditional gender ideologies that Tom

Shakespeare (1999) describes as equating masculinity with a negation of vulnerability and weakness (101), critics like Sally Chivers (2013) claim that there is the overall fear that men may lose their male potency as they grow older and that masculinity may undergo a process of decline when old age begins to manifest its effects (100). Correspondingly, in King's novel, some of the traits that used to typify Bill in his role as a younger detective—which were mostly suggestive of hegemonic masculinities and initially praised him for what he represented when he was active in youth—conversely, deprive him of his value and authority in his retirement, since, as Gabrielle Mueller (2009) claims, this later stage in life is symbolically perceived as “a process of emasculation” (151), in view of the tenets associated with dominant masculinities.

As Phillipa Gates (2010) argues, the detective began to resort to police procedural as a reaction to the physical and emotional burdens that men experienced as they attempted to fulfil traditional male roles (349). Narratives of police procedural emphasize the pervasive presence of guns and cars as tropes of traditional masculinity. Nonetheless, in King's (2015) novel, the classical symbolism attached to these gender-marked motifs as indicative of rough masculinity is reversed in order to underscore Bill's anxieties along the process of conforming to discourses of dominant masculinity in old age. Consequently, Bill is often described as sitting in his armchair next to his father's gun—a Victory model—while the gun he used when he was active—a Glock 40—is kept in the safe, hence nostalgically attempting to take over his father's role as an aging cop rather than recollecting his own professional past, from which he feels mentally and physically detached. Bill describes his father's gun, which is now his own, as “an oldie but a goodie” (15), while, “he pats it absently, the way you'd pat an old dog” (15). In different manifestations of *noir*, critics like Chivers claim that there is “a common connection between the gun and the penis” (112), which implies that the description of Bill's gun as old and indolent suggests a symbolic process of emasculation. In addition to guns, cars have also been conventionally linked to men's masculinity in the hard-boiled genre, and analogously, in King's fiction, the intimate relationship that men establish with their cars also reveals aspects of their male potency. When Bill meets his former partner Pete for the first time after his retirement, their cars turn into symbolic embodiments of their male identities, since, as is stated, “Hodges parks next to a plain gray Chevrolet sedan with blackwall tires that just about scream city police and gets out of his old Toyota, a car that just about

screams old retired fella” (King 2015, 47). In contrast with Pete’s lively and vigorous car, which is suggestive of the sort of masculinity that conforms to hegemonic discourses of manhood, Bill’s old car becomes a reflection of his stagnated existence as a retired detective.

The traditional discourses of masculinity that shaped Bill’s male identity as a younger detective not only categorize him as old, but also put to the test his manhood at this later stage of life. As Dennis Bingham (1994) claims, masculine domination responds to artifice rather than nature, hence arguing that this sort of traditional masculinity, based on values that exude power and dominance, remains in constant danger of slipping away in the course of aging. In Robert Meadows and Kate Davidson’s (2006) opinion, if hegemonic masculinity legitimizes patriarchal authority and extols traits such as physical strength and self-control, which have often been associated with youth, features conventionally related with old age, such as fragility and disease, may result in the exclusion of aged men from hegemonic conceptualizations of masculinity and may even lead them to question their male identity (296). Bill’s exclusion from dominant masculinities with the advent of old age paves the way for looking for narratives that do not associate old age with decay, but rather with male empowerment by means of resorting to counter-stories instead of narratives of decline.

2. COUNTER-STORIES AND POSITIVE AGING

When Bill realizes that the values aligned with hegemonic masculinities are usually related to youth, he symbolically determines to resort to a counter-narrative that will allow him to feel empowered as an aging detective. To quote from Nelson, a counter-narrative consists of “a story that contributes to the moral self-definition of its teller by undermining a dominant story, undoing it and retelling it in such a way as to invite new interpretations” (1995, 23). That being so, in contrast with the narrative of decline that he initially complies with, Bill adjusts to a counter-narrative, which grants him the possibility of reinventing his masculinity in old age, but also condemns him to the constraining delusion of positive aging.

The turning point which marks the shift from a decline to a progress narrative takes place when Bill’s apparently aimless existence is brought to a halt upon receiving an anonymous letter written by the criminal who perpetrated a massacre with a Mercedes car. Insofar as this is one of the few cases

that Bill could not resolve while he was active, the fact of being granted the opportunity to identify the culprit and eventually close the case not only triggers Bill into resuming his role as a detective, but also leads him to abandon his lethargy and seclusion. The criminal's reappearance has a symbolic invigorating effect on the retired detective; since Bill is able to sleep well again, he feels enthusiastic, and he even catches himself singing. As Bill concedes, "without Mr. Mercedes, things will go back to what they were: afternoon TV and playing with his father's gun" (King 2015, 160). Now, paradoxically, the criminal's return endows Bill with a new purpose in life.

This event also prompts an alteration in Bill's self-perceived masculinity. As soon as he is back in action, Bill begins to display confidence and resoluteness, thus resorting to traits that used to characterize his manhood in his youth. As a case in point, when he sees a little kid being bullied by three older boys in the park, despite his significant age difference, Bill fights successfully against three young boys in their prime. Besides, as Bill becomes absorbed in his investigations, it is evinced that he still retains the skills for which he was highly praised in the past. As is stated, "Hodges is delighted to find his remains in good working order" (85), and when he starts unravelling Mr Mercedes's letter to look for clues, it is conceded that, "just like in the old days—he rocks back in his chair" (133), in a display of self-contentment for being back to work. Furthermore, when Bill meets Janelle Patterson, Olivia's sister—the owner of the car with which Mr Mercedes committed the massacre—they start a relationship, which also contributes to Bill's regaining confidence in his sexual allure, as he is dating a woman who is twenty years his junior. In the course of their relationship, Janelle plays an important part in Bill's allegiance with positive aging, as he identifies his heavy body frame as a cause of shame and forces himself to eat healthily and lose weight. He even admits that "the life of the last few months—the afternoon TV, the microwave dinners, his father's Smith & Wesson revolver—seems so distant that it must have belonged to a fictional character in a boring foreign movie" (172). Besides, Janelle considers him as "old school" (115), thus categorizing his masculinity as reminiscent of long-gone days, but also suggesting her increasing attraction toward him. Hence, Bill is revered as a defender of the old order, since age qualifies him as an aging patriarch who defends justice and ethics associated with former times. In contrast with Bingham's interpretation of masculinity as a series of performed actions that are ultimately fated to weaken with the advent of old age, Jackie Stacey (2013) rather envisions the ideals of masculinity as

“increasingly realisable and cumulative with age” (226). Consequently, Bill makes use of his aging process to its full advantage.

As Nelson (1999) argues, identities are narratively constructed by either drawing stories from our cultural background that we apply to ourselves or by resorting to the identities that others impose on us (76). When Bill becomes acquainted with Janelle and accepts to apprehend the criminal who aggrieved her sister, the plot seems to purportedly resemble that of Raymond Chandler’s novel *The Big Sleep* (1939) along with Howard Hawks’s film adaptation released in 1946. When he falls in love with Janelle, Bill even compares himself explicitly with Philip Marlowe, since, although Bill warns himself at first, “easy, boy ... Philip Marlowe you ain’t” (King 2015, 109), when Janelle makes advances to him, Bill holds on to his fantasy, claiming, “maybe he could be Philip Marlowe after all ... he’d wear a trenchcoat and a brown fedora on rainy days, the hat pulled down to one eyebrow” (109). Moreover, Janelle buys Bill a fedora so that he can symbolically give free vent to his illusions, and she justifies her action, arguing that, “he’s a private detective now ... and every private dick should have a fedora he can pull down to one eyebrow” (219). Bill thus attempts to reclaim his age-threatened masculine identity by resorting to what Mueller (2009) defines as “the male escapist fantasy of freedom” (154), which involves emulating Marlowe as the iconic hard-boiled detective.

According to Bethany Ogdon (1992), the hard-boiled detective has been conventionally portrayed as the quintessential embodiment of the “straight, white male” (71), as legacy of the archetype of the cowboy. When Bill fights against three younger men, it is conceded that “Hodges considers trying a John Wayne drawl” (71), hence evoking, as Philip Simpson (2010) claims, the ideal of hegemonic masculinity in narratives of American popular fiction, like the adventure story and the Western (190). Moreover, according to critics like Fred Pfeil (1995) and Greg Forter (2000), the hard-boiled detective asserts his male authority by displacing his anxieties to embodiments of the figures of the Other, traditionally characterized as African-American, female, and sexually non-normative. Bill’s neighbor, Jerome, is a young African-American boy with bright prospects whom Bill hires as a gardener. Then, Bill recalls that when Janelle’s sister, Olivia, was alive, he and his fellow workers had misogynistic prejudices against her, as they believed she had forgotten the car keys in the ignition, which allowed Brady Hartsfield to start the engine and commit a mass murder. Finally, Brady’s troubling sexuality as represented

by his fixation with his mother contributes to reinforcing Bill's normative heterosexuality in comparison.

Subsequently, though, Bill's portrayal as an aging hard-boiled detective gradually shifts its focus from overt displays of dominant manhood to strategies to cope with the anxieties derived from conforming to hegemonic masculinities. In fact, to quote from Christopher Breu (2005), hard-boiled fiction can be regarded as "an aggressive reformulation of male hegemony as much as a defensive reaction to what might have been perceived as a set of economic and social threats to its hegemony" (5). In relation to postmodern reinterpretations of hard-boiled fiction, Patricia Merivale (2010) identifies features such as metatextual references, paradoxes of identity, and the figure of the double (311–12), which lay bare the constructed ideals of masculinity that the hard-boiled detective represents. In King's novel, metafictional references to iconic representations of the hard-boiled detective, such as Philip Marlowe, have the effect of unveiling Bill's emulation of this fictional prototype. King's novel also includes paradoxes of identity that accentuate the slippage of identities between the characters of the detective and the criminal, since Bill works in favor of the law, but he also operates on its margins. Besides, despite being antagonists, Bill and Brady turn into doubles of one another, insofar as they become mutually dependent, since Brady devotes his life to trigger Bill into committing suicide, while Bill's fixation to capture Brady gives him a reason to live.

In accordance with Chivers's (2013) claim that, as an anti-hero, the hard-boiled detective "does not age particularly well" (105), Bill faces a series of constant reminders that suggest that his allegiance to positive aging may prove impractical in old age. When he is dating Janelle, he exclaims that "he wishes he were fifteen years younger—even ten" (King 170), and when they sleep together for the first time, he also adds, "if I'd known this could happen at this stage of my life, I would have gotten back to the gym" (172). Moreover, allusions to Bill's declining hearing, his need to take a long nap after lunch and his urgency to use the bathroom in the middle of the night are taken as further evidence to underscore Bill's old age. It is thus suggested that Bill's recourse to a counter-narrative that holds on to hegemonic masculinities responds to a male fantasy that seems impractical at this stage of life. Hence, Bill determines to leave behind his allegiance to positive aging in order to embrace, instead, a narrative of becoming that paves the way for embracing old age in a more feasible way.

3. NARRATIVES OF BECOMING AND AGING MASCULINITIES

In contrast with decline and progress narratives, Gravagne (2013) refers to narratives of becoming as those seeking “emancipation from normative assumptions about aging” (183), hence disrupting both ageism and positive aging with the purpose of envisioning old age as a stage of transformation. In King’s novel, Bill’s actions metaphorically involve a reaction against the ideologies that essentialize old age and associate it with decay, while, no longer ashamed of displaying his weaknesses at a later stage in life, Bill also relinquishes his former allegiance with hegemonic masculinities. As Meadows and Davidson (2006) argue, aged men may formulate alternative masculinities which incorporate actions that are not derived from patriarchal attitudes, but instead embrace vulnerability, both in terms of psychological exposure and physical fragility (302). After witnessing Janelle die, Bill finally allows himself to cry, since, as is stated, “he leans against the wall, eyes closed, and takes half a dozen big, shuddering breaths—the tears come now” (King 2015, 280). Likewise, despite his central role in their team, when Bill notices that he is suffering a heart attack, he resorts to his younger partners, Jerome and Holly, so that they can apprehend Brady instead of him. As is explained, Bill becomes aware of the symptoms, since “he’s started to have trouble breathing—the pain is creeping down his left arm, and his chest feels too heavy,” even though it is remarked that “his head is clear” (375). Besides, after a lifetime being subjected to the precepts of dominant masculinities, Bill feels remorseful and in need of redemption. As is admitted, “when Hodges looks back, so many of the victims seem to be women: Janey, Olivia Trelawney,” while he estimates that “his own destructive record with women stretches back even further” (342). Arising from this personal process of reassessment, Bill gradually grows detached from the patterns of hegemonic masculinities in order to seek an alternative sort of manhood.

In this respect, Gene Cohen (2005) proposes a substitute model to reinterpret old age as a period that goes from midlife re-evaluation to liberation and, ultimately, discloses the potential for new endeavors (31). Having defeated Brady and apparently closed the case that he could not resolve when he was active as a detective, in his aging years, Bill is offered a job as a guard which will still allow him to put his skills into practice, but in a quieter environment, insofar as, after suffering a heart attack, Bill carries a “pacemaker ticking away in his chest” (400). Besides, no longer able to work on his own, Bill extends his professional partnership with his young neighbor, Jerome,

who is still under eighteen, and Janelle's cousin, Holly, who is in her early forties, but looks like a teenager. Bill's experience as a detective thus complements the skills of his younger accomplices. As Carol Gilligan (1997) claims, notions of interdependence alter not only the way individuals perceive others, but also the way they perceive themselves (210). Accordingly, having rejected to envision his aging masculinity as a decline narrative, while also refusing to be subjected to the oppressive demands of hegemonic masculinities, Bill embraces conceptualizations of aging masculinities that favor becoming, thus conforming to narratives of transformation that allow him to adapt to the realities of old age.

CONCLUSION

By means of the recent publication of his detective trilogy, King should take the credit for updating the tradition of hard-boiled fiction. With the incorporation of a series of features, such as metafictional references, the blurring of identities between archetypes of the genre, and the double figures of the detective and the criminal, *Mr Mercedes* can be described as a paradigmatic example of the postmodern hard-boiled novel. In particular, King's significant contribution to the genre lies in creating a detective whose old age is recurrently evoked to the extent that his aging process plays a central part in the way his male identity is defined. Although the hard-boiled detective has traditionally been associated with a kind of hegemonic masculinity, as legacy of the archetype of the cowboy in the American tradition, critics like Krutnik (1991), and more recently, Pepper (2010) argue that the sort of tough manhood that the hard-boiled detective appears to epitomize is mostly deceptive and conceals male anxieties to conform to prototypes of dominant masculinity.

As a character, Bill is portrayed as a contemporary representative of the archetype of the hard-boiled detective. Owing to his former allegiance to dominant masculinities which extolled traits such as physical toughness, Bill undergoes a relentless process of male disempowerment that coincides with the advent of old age, thus configuring a narrative of decline. Subsequently, as he is roused back to action by the reappearance of Brady, his antagonist, Bill resorts to the dominant masculinity that used to characterize him in youth and that now condemns him, in his old age, to the dictates of positive aging until he realizes that he can no longer resort to this sort of hegemonic

masculinity. Finally, as a retired detective, Bill engages in a narrative of becoming whereby he embraces an alternative masculinity which is characterized by accepting vulnerability, finding new ways to canalize his skills, and establishing mutually-enriching networks. King's portrayal of a retired hard-boiled detective in current times paves the way for imagining alternative masculinities, hence leaving behind oppressive male identities which mostly contributed to envisioning old age as an unwelcoming life stage. King's novel thus transmutes and updates the archetype of the hard-boiled detective with a particular focus on old age as an agent of transformation.

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IN STEPHEN KING'S *MR MERCEDES*

Summary

The portrayal of the aging detective in King's first novel of his trilogy of hard-boiled fiction, *Mr Mercedes* (2014), brings to the fore the interconnection between the discourses of gender and aging, while it also underscores contemporary reinterpretations that call into question the representation of the classic hard-boiled detective as a paradigm of dominant masculinity. Drawing on concepts from the field of age studies—such as Margaret Gullette's decline and progress narratives, Hilde Lindemann Nelson's counter-stories, and Pamela Gravagne's narratives of becoming—this article analyses the way that old age determines the evolution from hegemonic to alternative masculinities in King's contemporary portrayal of the hard-boiled detective.

Keywords: aging masculinities; decline narratives; progress narratives; narratives of becoming; hard-boiled fiction

OD SCHYŁKU DO WZROSTU — ZMIENIAJĄCY SIĘ OBRAZ
STARZEJĄCEJ SIĘ MĘSKOŚCI W *PANIE MERCEDESIE* STEPHENA KINGA

Streszczenie

Obraz starzejącego się detektywa w *Panie Mercedesie* (2014), pierwszej części trylogii detektywistycznej Kinga, wskazuje na współzależność pomiędzy dyskursami o płci i starzeniu się, przywołując jednocześnie współczesne reinterpretacje poddające w wątpliwość przedstawienie postaci detektywa z czarnych kryminałów jako paradygmatu dominującej męskości. Posiłkując się koncepcjami z zakresu badań nad wiekiem — takich jak opowieści o schyłku i wzroście autorstwa Margaret Gullette, kontrhistorie Hilde Lindemann Nelson i opowieści o stawianiu się Pameli Gravagne — artykuł poddaje analizie sposób, w jaki starość determinuje ewolucję od hegemonistycznego do alternatywnego postrzegania męskości w przedstawianym przez Kinga współczesnym literackim obrazie detektywa.

Słowa kluczowe: starzejąca się męskość; opowieść o schyłku; opowieść o wzroście; opowieść o stawianiu się; czarny kryminał